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MEDIA CONTACT
Meghan Jansen
816-804-8882 / 816-859-7019
info@kcstreetcar.org

Welding Hot Enough to Melt a Penny in Seconds

Track Construction Underway South of 20th Street

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI – After three weeks of prep work, which involved grinding and milling 1-2" of concrete off the existing bridge, the Main Street Bridge deck is ready for track construction.

The first step in constructing the track is to join 312' strings of rail using a process called "thermite welding." The joints between the rails are filled with a thermite compound that is heated to temperatures in excess of 4,500 degrees Fahrenheit – hot enough to melt a penny in seconds. A single thermite weld takes 2-3 hours, from set-up to a finished, smooth weld. Once cooled, the rail is placed on steel ties and bolted in place. Concrete is then poured around the rail, resulting in embedded track and a new roadway.

The KC Streetcar Constructors will construct approximately 1,000 feet of track, totaling more than 38 tons, on the Main Street Bridge over the course of the next several weeks. Thermite welding of the track begins this week.

Once complete, traffic will be able to drive over the completed track work, as seen on the I-670/Truman Rd Bridge. Crews will be working on the west side of the bridge until late August. After the west side of the bridge is complete, crews will start working on the east side of the bridge beginning with the milling of concrete off the bridge deck.

To see a penny melt, or for a full description of the thermite welding process, video and images, visit the KC Streetcar website.

For more information, contact Meghan Jansen at info@kcstreetcar.org, 816-859-7019 or 816-804-8882.